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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problems encountered in implementing methodology that face vocational English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL), native language teachers in Japan. Teachers in "senmon gakko," two or three year vocational schools for high schools or high school graduates, are unable to take advantage of a significant amount of the literature describing constructive methodology in EFL/ESL programs. Social factors within and outside the schools combine to confound the process of innovative design and implementation in academic programs by curtailing the teachers' opportunities to utilize the advances in education and to participate in research. This paper draws upon personal experiences in education and research, and discusses the ways these social parameters are affecting teachers and the pedagogical strategies that accommodate their environment. Resistance is encountered in updating methodology because teachers do not have enough control over the environment and because they are burdened with social and temporal constrains. Sufficient attention has not been given by ELT (English Language Teaching) research to the environmental problems that classroom teachers face, leaving teachers without pragmatic models that give an adequate account of human parameters. In exploring the institutional parameters, the paper discusses the teachers' role and administrative priorities and accountability. Teachers are confronted by: (1) students' lack of preparedness, misconceptions, and motivation; (2) lack of accountability inherent in administrative policy and students' attitudes; (3) low order of priority given to educational prerogatives; (4) lack of esteem for career teachers; (5) work overloads; and (6) overall lack of support from ELT research. (DK)

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Social and Administrative Parameters in Methodological Innovation and Implementation in Post-secondary Language Schools in Japan

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Social and Administrative Parameters in Methodological Innovation and Implementation in Post-secondary Language Schools in Japan

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INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the problems encountered in implementing methodology that face vocational (senmon gakko) EFL/ESL, native language teachers in Japan. Teachers in senmon gakko (two and three-year 'vocational' schools for high schools for high school graduates) are unable to take advantage of a significant amount of the literature describing constructive methodology in EFL/ESL programmes. Social factors within and outside the schools combine to confound the process of innovative design and implementation in academic programmes by curtailing the teachers' opportunities to utilize the advances in education and to paricipate in research. This paper will draw upon the authors' experiences in education and research and discuss the ways these social parameters are affecting teachers and the pedagogical strategies that accommodate their environment.

I. HUMAN PARAMETERS

Henrichsen (1989) makes very clear the reasons for the resistance encountered in updating methodology: Teachers do not have enough control over the environment, and they are burdened with social and temporal constraints. Moreover, he notes the infrequency of investigations into methodology implementation (ibid: 13-17), a serious shortcoming in EFL/ESL. There has not been sufficient attention given by ELT research to the environmental problems that classroom teachers face leaving teachers without pragmatic models that give an adequate account of human parameters. Failure to give meaningful attention to human relationship in the educational environment while predicting learning outcomes is to engage in sheer speculation.

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Teachers may not even get much respect or regard for their abilities from those involved in research. Gais insists that:

> The literature of the last few decades has been largely colored by the assumption that given free rein, teachers will muck things up. They'll talk too much, they'll stress accuracy based practice over opportunities, they even ask students questions to which they, the teachers, already know the answers: all in all, they'll generally get in the way and get things wrong. (1991:9)

For the most part, Gais continues, language classrooms have been defined and analyzed in terms of the students and methods in teaching, there has not been much interest in the teacher. There seems to be little difference between the way researchers have been treating teachers and the treatment meted out by school administrators. If teachers have been responding toward ELT research and researchers as they have been responding to their administrators, then hostility and suspicion are common attributes of the relationship between researchers and teachers. It is ironic that teacher trainers or those who inform teachers are having difficulty teaching teachers.

Brumfit's methodological principles (1984:1) speak clearly to teachers in vocational and conversation schools. To paraphrase freely, perceptions and underlying rationale must: 1) be related to the actual environment and not an idealized model, 2) be directly applicable/translatable to the environment, 3) reflect the teachers' role and refer, in the final analysis, to the impact the teacher has on others. But if, as Richards says "It is not until the goals, objectives, and content of a language program have been determined that decisions about methodology can be taken up in detail" (1990:11), then teachers are left out in the cold. Realistically, any methodology that a teacher adopts may be profoundly circumscribed by unsupportive administrators and reticent students; holistic state-of-the-art education may be a distant reality. Relating an applicable methodology that reflects the teacher's role in the real environment is a far greater problem than determining goals, objectives and content of a language program. The language teachers in vocational language schools are coping in a subdivision of ELT—TEFL for TEAE: "Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Teachers of English in an Apathetic Environment".

Ⅱ. INSTITUTIONAL PARAMETERS: A CLOSED ENVIRONMENT

A. The Teachers' Role

In many language programmes in Japan, English teachers are primarily employed to teach basic skills which are often not integrated into comprehensive curricula. They are not involved in the process of developing the programme (Simmons 1993), and they do not usually get adequate compensation for developing materials. As a result, the teachers do not have an efficient infrastructure to coordinate and improve their work, nor can they readily upgrade the existing programme materials.

Societal biases compound unsupportive or obstructive administrative policies. Kay (1993:37) articulates the view that non-Japanese teachers who comprise the ranks of native language models are primarily hired for their native language skills and their foreignness—an attribute that provides Japanese staff and students the opportunity to express, confirm or reassess their presumptions about foreigners. The inference is that courses taught by non-Japanese have a lower academic value than those taught by Japanese instructors. Wordell (1993:153) offers the insight that the attempt or desire to initiate changes in the programme and the attributes of foreignness may actually be considered a threat to social harmony. These biases often curtail the teachers' authority to deal with necessary improvements.

B. Administrative Priorities and Accountability

Japanese post-secondary vocational schools are established by school foundations (Gakko Hojin) or individuals who are, in practice, not accountable to any accrediting body or regulating agency. Personnel matters are usually in the hands of the principal or the board. Shiozawa, Simmons, and Noda (1993:159) report that administrators in control of the education programmes often do not regard educational prerogatives as priorities of the first order and confine native language teachers to those activities that do not require administrative support or create frictions with the administrations' policies. For these reasons, working conditions vary greatly and programme quality is, in a number of cases, unreliable, because of the highly personal and therefore variable nature of administrative policy.

1. Inadequate staffing

Historically, private institutions are financially unstable and very vulnerable to market pressures (Nagai, 1971:249-250). Vocational schools and conversation schools are particularly vulnerable to market pressures, because the entire budget comes from the tuition and fees the students pay. Expatriate instructors often suffer from the administrations' financial ineptitude or adverse market pressure (compounded by the former). Rather than treating expatriate teachers as career professionals, the administrations of many foreign language schools (and to be fair, most national post-secondary institutions and a number of private ones) regard expatriate teachers as transient labour. Expatriates' contracts are renewed yearly and their numbers are adjusted to accommodate budgetary constraints. Since expatriate teachers are rare among tenured staff at post-secondary institutions (U. S. Dept. of Ed., 1987:53), most work in practical English courses is performed by temporary and part-time teachers. Asahi Shinbun, an influential nation-wide Japanese newspaper, (April 29, 1993) quoting *Nature*, said that in the 98 Japanese national schools (kokuritsu) in Japan, there are 201 non-Japanese full-time staff, but only 17 of them are tenured, the rest teach on a one to five year contract. Recent policy changes from the Ministry may lower the number further.

Part-time and temporary teachers comprise a growing proportion of the national language teaching faculty. Long-term curricular and research goals are beyond the reach of these teachers who work under large student loads. Most language teachers in senmon gakko have teaching loads that exceed twenty class hours a week, though not necessarily at the same institution. Part-time teachers are bound by financial contingencies to hold three or four jobs with very demanding and erratic schedules. They have little time to address the students' needs. These logistical and temporal constraints are manifest in the lack of quality attention teachers can give their students.

2. Oversized classes

Large class loads are a universal administrative policy that places teachers and students at a disadvantage. The size of the classes at high school and many post secondary schools in Japan, according to Wadden and McGovern (1993:143), typically range from forty to sixty students. The literature provides evidence that class size is a factor in the quality of education. Large classes adversely effect academic achievement, and

produce students who evince poor study skills and unbalanced language competence (Preece, 1987; Christensen, 1991). Additionally, the high student to teacher ratio imposes an accumulating physical and mental stress on the teacher, because large-class management takes a great deal of preparation and supervision. French (1993:72) states that higher teacher-student rations appear to have a measurable relationship to undesirable stress reactions in teachers; reactions that are particularly evident among the over-extended part-time and temporary teachers. Kaizenkon, the joint committee for reforming language education, composed of more than ten major language teaching and research organizations in Japan, also stated that the over-sized classes are one of the biggest problems Japanese language teachers are confronting. It argues the biggest number of the students per class should be 20, preferably 12-15. (Shiozawa, 1993)

3. Classroom pacing

An additional logistical demand on the teacher's time is pacing that is inappropriate for the students' learning rates. As in the secondary and elementary schools, the teachers are forced to maintain a schedule in class that does not reflect the learning rates of the students; they must present excessive amounts of information regardless of whether the students have time to master it. (The U. S. Dept. of Ed. make note of this fast pace, but they assert that the students are able to keep up. Contrarily, they later go into detail about the various means employed by significant numbers of students who fall further and further behind (1987:32)) Dempster (1993) discusses the problems to which excessive amounts of information can lead: Students must deal with increasing amounts of interference as the different class subjects load students up without giving them time to master the information. This excessive pace discourages students and frustrates teachers as both parties watch the unlearned material accumulate while the school year progresses.

Ⅲ. PROGRAMME DESIGN

A. Syllabus, Curriculum and Text

There is arguably, as Robinson (1991:7-17) points out, a very real need for 'needs analysis' from which to design the curriculum and supporting syllabuses in what, ***realistically***, should be ESP programmes. Senmon gakko programmes have weakly

defined objectives. The curricula are rarely more than schedules of classes defined only by their titles, and the syllabuses are commonly sparse schedules for the completion of assigned texts. Without specified objectives with evaluation requirements, they certainly do not meet Hutchinson and Waters' criteria of accountable teaching (1987:144).

Toda points out the need to marry curricula with realistic expectations:

> The fields of study that colleges and universities offer have been subject to change...this process of change...lags behind because the bureaucracy in the university administration responds slowly and because the link between the college curricula and the world of work after graduation is not yet clearly understood. (1986:27)

Nunan's proposed model (1988:76) to incorporate the syllabus (what is taught) with the methodology (how it is taught) in an integrated approach through the process of the modification of objectives during the learning-teaching process is an example of an innovation that would be severely undermined by the administrative policies and rigid control of programmes and materials. Any need realized for methodologies to reflect curriculum goals would be superfluous, and implementation would be sporadic or meet with failure because the goals bear no deliberate relation to what must be learned or how it is learned. Any underlying rationale for legitimate curricular objectives in English education in Japan are not manifest in the programmes. As Wardhaugh (Shiozawa, Simmons, 1993) and Pounds (1993) relate: The commonly stated goal of learning English for communication is apparently little more than a panacea that agrees with the current fashion. Rhetoric, fads and political agenda present a facade of educational goals that differ considerably with the real goals in the institutions which do not in turn reflect any legitimate long-term agenda to establish productive EFL programmes. Communicative English programmes are not a priority.

An example of a curriculum renewal project can by virtue of its rarity serve to illustrate the typical state of affairs in senmon gakko. The Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages is in the initial stages of a renewal programme under the auspices of David Nunan and Christopher Candlin. A presentation was made at the Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT) 18th Annual International Conference of Language Teaching and Learning in Kawagoe (Johson, F., et al., 1992) and another at the JALT Tokyo Chapter Spring Conference (Mont, Simmons, Damm, 1993). This programme is remarkable for at least three aspects: (a) the teachers are directly involved with establishing curriculum, materials, training and evaluation, (b) the programme is within the aegis of professional, career educators and (c) it is being done. A research based and

educator controlled programme is evidence of a distinct move away from non-educational priorities typical of post-secondary institutions in Jaspan (Shiozawa, Simmons, Noda, 1993:30).

B. Ability Grouping

A common policy of senmon gakko administrations concerns segregating students into 'ability' groups defined by the results of entrance exams—a practice which the U. S. Department of Education (1987:5) reports as routine in Japanese schools. Theoretically, ability grouping (also referred to as 'tracking') serves to reduce the management load in large classes, however, in practice, it obstructs teachers in their efforts to administer to the specific needs of the lower-level students (unless the classes geared to the lower-level students are separately designed and implemented). Grouping is then an administrative expediency to rationalize segregated grouping based on the presumed level of relative ability rather than demonstrated ability.

C. Assessment and Testing

Standardized testing ostensibly plays a prominent role in ability [illegible], promotions and graduation for students. These exams, which are often no [illegible] an a formality, could feasibly play an evaluative role in needs analysis. However, even if used adequately, they still present their own problems. Worthen (1993:445-446) and Rigg (1991:528) report the criticisms regarding standardized testing and articulate arguments for the need to develop alternatives to the negative effects of standardized testing. The standardized tests are not always adequate for the students' needs and often do not serve the educators' efforts unless the standard tests are specially made for the specific needs of the students' and teachers'. These problems are especially true in vocational language schools.

Final exams, which could provide a measure of the programmes' effectiveness, have virtually no impact on the students' academic career. Students are promoted and graduated almost automatically, unless they fail an excessive number of classes, in a practice begun in the elementary through secondary grades (U. S. Department of Education, 1987: 26). Prospective employers show little interest in their potential employee's school grades. Thus, the cycle of easy promotion of the students and an inadequate emphasis on actual learning is reinforced.

IV. STUDENT PARAMETERS

A. Motivation and Expectations

Low student motivation and unrealistic expectations contribute to the resistance teachers must deal with. There is a very different attitude toward the role of post-secondary education in Japan than in most countries from which foreign language teachers come. The students lead a very structured lifestyle which is suspended at the end of high school and resumed when they finish their post-secondary education. Students who make it into a four-year college or university get four years of experimentation with freedom, and then they are expected to resume their regimented lifestyle. White describes the four year colleges environment:

> The college years, by contrast [with the high school environment], are years of relaxed, self-directed study and play (for all but those students in pre-professional programs such as medicine, law, or engineering). What these high school students have to look forward to is not more of the same, not intense lectures and cramming of facts, but a study program that is close to nonexistent. Faculty often do not show up for classes (nor do students), and expectations for performance are low. But the companies and workplaces hiring new recruits are not concerned, for the most part. They hire on the basis of the prestige of the institution, not on what the individual may have learned there. (1988:12)

Although some may respond that White's description of Japanese college is exaggerated, it still depicts general scenes of post-secondary schools in Japan. The two-and three-year senmon gakko students expect the same lifestyle that the four-year college students enjoy. The majority go to senmon gakko a few hours a day and spend the rest of the time working at part-time jobs and developing their social life. As Kelly (1993:172-191) explains, this is not a time for academic endeavour, it is a time to develop their social dimensions. They fully expect to study a few hours a week and become fluent in English.

The authors are, however, fully cognizant of the motivated students who are committed to their studies and do not wish to cast dispersions indiscriminately. Additionally, the Japanese four-year post-secondary are currently undergoing the initial stages of major structure and curriculum reformation as they attempt to establish a means of self-evaluation. However, this wave of once-a-century education reformation at the college level does not seem to have reached the shore at the vocational school level yet.

Cummings (1988:7) places the current state of affairs in an historical perspective. The early students (19th century) were considered to be:

> mature partners in the pursuit of knowledge...although the composition and motivation of students has changed greatly.

Currently the problem is that

> Even those students who spend most of their college days in clubs activities and other leisurely pursuits receive passing grades and are allowed to graduate.

A series of polls of vocational language school students taken since April of 1990 at the Japan College of Foreign Languages (Nihon Gaikokugo Senmon Gakko) in their first semester of school, indicates that they have extremely unrealistic expectations. Of 1507 students who answered the in-class questionnaires, 1296 (76%) said they expected to spend less than an hour a week studying for all classes. They curriculum includes classes in Japanese culture, preparations for the STEP Test supported by Mombusho (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) exams, vocational class (computer literacy and office automation, translation and interpretation, protocol and regulations for the travel industry) and EFL course work (reading, writing, speaking and listening). They have about 14 hours of instruction a week. Even more unrealistic are their responses to the following questions: (a) Do you think you will learn to speak English well at this school? and (b) What grade do you think you will get in this class (on a 5point scale 'A B C D F)? To question (a) 1251 students (83%) said they could learn to speak English well in two years. To question (b) 1396 (93%) said they would get a 'B' or an 'A'.

There might be a plausible explanation for the students' lack of commitment. Post-secondary education in Japan is widely acknowledged as a time to experiment and stretch ones' social life. Most students begin dating and get part-time jobs. They plan vacations overseas. Allowances from parents are a major source of funds and there are few among them who are independent (out of the 1507 students, there were a total of 17 students who did not live on support from parents). A collection of nearly 1000 dialogue journals that students have written for the authors indicate that the predominant theme is their social life. School is an annoyance and studying is an intrusion. They occupy themselves by going out till late hours with friends two or three times a week, getting to bed after 1:00 a. m. most nights each week, watching 4 to 5 hours of TV a day, shopping with friends, quarreling with friends, working part-time jobs to fund their social life and prepare for travel abroad, and just basically concerning themselves

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with their social life (or their perceived lack of it). Studies are a very low priority.

Part-time jobs are a significant focus of their social life. It seems to give them a wider more eclectic circle of friends (in comparison to the more or less prescribed circle of friends in the regimented years before college) and a new kind of financial freedom. Amano mentions that the students' role in the service industry is such that:

> One can almost say that the service industries would not be able function without their student workers *(1988: 15)*.

So their lack of concern does not seem unusual to educators who have been teaching English in Japan. Experienced teachers are familiar with the real agenda that post-secondary education serves here in Japan. What is puzzling is the students' unrealistic expectation to actually become fluent in English in a few years with less than one hour of study outside of class and approximately 6 to 9 hours a week in large (40 to 50) language performance classes.

Needless to say, a natural consequence of their lack of accountability increases the teachers' supervisory load appreciably. With this in mind, before any real gains can be made in education, teachers learn that it is imperative that they spend a large amount of time to convince the students to apply themselves, if they are to have a realistic chance of obtaining their goals.

B. Gaikosei-Naikosei (Extroverted-Introverted)

Grabe and Kaplan (1992:87) refer to Rubin (1975:45-48) in describing the following characteristics of proficient language learners:

1) able and willing to guess accurately
2) motivated to communicate
3) uninhibited (willing to make mistakes)
4) concern themselves with form
5) look for opportunities to use their language skills
6) monitor speech of those around them and their own speech
7) look for pragmatic or underlying meaning

In light of what has been said about the students who come to senmon gakko, it becomes readily apparent that the teachers are confronted by students with attitudes that do not lend themselves to an optimum learning environment. Furthermore, the students' unwillingness to take chances and expose their inadequate language abilities (characteristics

2, 3 and 5) are major stumbling blocks to teachers who must spend an inordinate amount of time getting the students to produce language and practice outside of the classroom.

Attending to the conscious intellectual involvement of the learner (Grabe and Kaplan, ibid 87-88) comprises a large proportion of the effective teacher's time in class. Teaching the students to amend inadequate or adverse learning styles involves the task of convincing students that they must, for example, volunteer information in a conversation class or be able to relate, in writing, an opinion based on acquired information. Reticent students and students who are largely uninterested in the world in which they live have a difficult time volunteering information they don't have or asserting opinions they have never developed. Typically, Japanese students do not ask for clarification nor do they offer different points of view.

Teaching someone a foreign language presumes more factors than this particular article can possibly address. It must be noted, however, that the willingness to communicate in the foreign language is arguably a matter of concern. The desire and ability to communicate will demonstrably serve the student in learning another language. These are the most concrete dimensions of the students' social/cultural parameters with which vocational language school teachers must deal: Can students communicate and do they want to communicate? For these reasons it should be apparent that the question of the student's competency in their own language is of practical interest to the teacher.

Take a very straight forward classroom situation used by one of the authors—two or three students (group A) are given two minutes to introduce themselves to each other and then the same students introduce themselves to two or three other separate individuals (group B). After the second round of introductions, group A students are asked to introduce group B to the other group A students. The students use set dialogue that they understand and are allowed any number of variations in the group setting (variations that increase over the period of the semester). They may ask any question in English and may then use the information gleaned in their introductions. The groups continue to encompass consecutive groups until the entire class is involved in the one to one conversations and the subsequent introductions. It is an admittedly artificial environment, but it has a fairly low risk level since they eventually become one of a large group, are not being exhaustively monitored and corrected, and have very little attention focused on them. The students enlist a wider and wider group into their circle, they begin to ask more questions of their own choice and evince their interests in their questions.

The teacher's role in this is to encourage the students to use English and to get them to introduce themselves. Otherwise, there is very little involvement and the teacher spends most of 15 to 25 minutes simply looking for people who rely too heavily on their native language and observing student strategies (or lack of them) to initiate and maintain the short and simple conversations. The object is simply to get the students to use what English they have in what becomes progressively a student-centered activity. The activity can often (but not always) serve to show the students that they do have the basic skills needed to actually engage in communication in English.

There is a third reason for using this situation—finding students who appear to be gaikosei (extroverts) and then check their behavior against the other students' perceptions of their behavior in their native language. In the last $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, one of the authors has found a high correlation between those who are outgoing in their language and those who are talkative in the second/foreign language in these group situations. These students can serve as role models for other students and are often the very students who wish to engage in as much practice as possible. It is, of course, important to enlist the outgoing students' cooperation rather than imposing the function of class model.

While these informal observations can not give any more than a working hypothesis, they lead inexorably to this question: Are we asking students to manifest personal attributes that are not naturally their own? Can we expect the introverted and the obsequious to be conversant or compose essays in another language. This question leads back to the observations on evaluation. Since there is little coherent regard for establishing the students' entry level grammar and discourse abilities, and sociolinguistic and strategic proclivities (cf. Coulthard 1985:147), there is very little the teacher can do to establish definitive parameters to utilize in any programme of comprehensive evaluation of the effects of teaching upon the students' personalities—evaluation that may help us establish if we ask too much, or too little, or the right things.

C. Student Preparation

Inadequate background knowledge compounds the motivation problems. The students' lack of preparation seems to be a natural consequence of their previous training in English. Teachers are painfully aware that English-language education prior to entering post-secondary education institutions is primarily for the preparation of college entrance exams and has no apparent basis in the actual use of their skills for content ac-

quisition or communication. Additionally, as Vaughn (1993) relates what so many teachers know so well, students are unaccustomed to actually participating in class. This is a distinct disadvantage for methodologies that place an emphasis on interacting and an attitude that places a further burden on the teachers' time.

Preparation for reading and writing also presents a problem for Japanese students who receive their exposure to the written form of the English language through Mombusho curriculum using certified texts. Shiozawa (1993) and Shiozawa and Simmons (1990) surveyed 400 essays and 22 certified textbooks being used in public and private schools in Japanese high schools. They discovered that the texts had scant emphasis on the written form beyond the sentence level and short paragraphs. This approach would seem to give little toward enabling Japanese students to actually develop skill in coherency at a level that would allow them to produce or comprehend texts of paragraph length or greater, an area that has been the subject of extensive inquiries in applied linguistics.

The initial inquiry into 400 essays written by senmon gakko students at the Japan College of Foreign Languages (JCFL) and university students at the Nagoya area supported this hypothesis. Many of the student-generated texts displayed marked intersentential incoherence as well as inadequate cohesiveness. Subsequent surveys of entry level compositions since then, continue to show a marked lack of incoherence. The most readily apparent shortcoming in student-generated texts is the inability to deal competently with all but the most simple endophoric references between more than two or three sentences. This seems to be mirrored in the difficulties students have, for example, in following pronominal substitutions within the paragraph structure. References between paragraphs present an even greater maze of difficulties through which teachers must spend significant amounts of time guiding students if they are to comprehend or produce texts of extensive lengths.

Questionnaires answered by 842 students from September 1989 till November 1992 at JCFL showed that less than 22% (184 students) had received instruction in composing paragraphs and less than 7 % (78 students) had any instruction in composing texts larger than one paragraph. The student population were all high school graduates with 61% (513 students) from metropolitan Kanto high schools (Tokyo, Kawasaki and Yokohama) and the remainder from other prefectures.

V. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

A. Authentic, Communicative, Coherent English

1. Authentic versus 'artificial' English

While one may not actually agree with the tenants stated by many proponents of the "whole language" movement as they are reiterated by Rigg (1991:522), one can see the need to marry authentic language with the students' collective and individual cultures as a decisive factor in the learning and experience in the use of English for communication. They have a distorted view of English—it has been for them a subject for exams and not necessarily for communication. The inadequacies of senmon gakko programme designs also dictate the need to establish a meaning-centred classroom to give the students, in Rigg's words, language experience that is "purposeful, functional and real" (ibid: 526). By instituting meaning-centred strategies, teachers can adapt extracurricular activities to the syllabus and thereby widen their realm of authentic resources. In addition, the students' motivation receives a needed boost through enhanced interest and they will deal with topics with which they are familiar. Applying meaning-centred strategies improves the learning environment and conceivably reduces the amount of individual supervision needed.

An authentic, holistic language approach may give the vocational language school teachers a chance to take advantage of greater gains in teaching students to communicate. Widdowson and Brumfit postulated that:

> True communicative teaching may depend upon our stressing language as a means to acquire knowledge, rather than as an end in itself... If the teaching of a subject were to be carried on through the medium of a foreign language, many problems associated with communication would disappear. (1981:197)

This area may be a way of bringing vocational language school teachers in out of the cold. To supplement the classroom syllabus (such as it may be) with the use of content as a focus of language teaching (rather than the predominant focus on language) will be a constructive step forward.

Such an attempt would not be without problems. In his discussion of discourse analysis and language teaching, Coulthard (1985: 156-57) points out that communicative syllabuses are "to facilitate and encourage communication in the classroom". He draws attention to Brumfit's assertion (1978: 103) that the post-communicative model "is now

a student determined system with the advantage that 'what needs to be taught' is defined by failures to communicate at the Ist stage which thus operates as a diagnosis" . With this, teachers are presented with a student-centred system which employs failure as a diagnostic instrument. This places senmon gakko teachers at disadvantage; the subject population is largely composed of markedly reticent students who are profoundly afraid of failure. We are left with very little alternative to the student-centred classroom, because language required by the teacher, in a more teacher-centred classroom (Coulthard, ibid: 157) is more or less artificial; since it arises from the teacher's requirements to produce language and not the need to use language. As a consequence, the teacher-centred, foreign language classroom is not genuinely communicative.

The question presents itself, 'What is the characteristic that bestows the property of 'artificialness'; the fact that language is required or that a teacher requires it?' Required responses are common in authentic English. Does that make them artificial? A fairly clear example of required language—"How does the defendant plead?"—is a question that requires a response (with rather more force than a teacher would bring to the classroom). Surely the requirement to satisfy the expectations of someone can not in and of itself bestow 'artificial-ness'. That leaves us with the teacher as the component that bestows artificial-ness in the 'not genuinely communicative' foreign language classroom. Having already asserted that the administrative policies and the student population are the controlling forces in the senmon gakko, it should be pointed out that the concept of a student centred-classroom presumes temporal and logistical flexibility that does not exist for most teachers—at least not without a great cost to themselves in time taken from their personal lives.

Coulthard (ibid: 147) does, however, allow that there are degrees of communicativeness and artificiality, and with that concession it is possible to demonstrate what this can mean in very practical situations. He further delineates communicative competence (after Canale, 1983) into these four areas: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. Sociolinguistic competence deals with appropriateness in direct and indirect speech acts. It is an area rich in potential and crucial to bringing English into the realm of inter-cultural exchange for Japanese students. Body language and facial expressions (kinesics) as well as topic choice and introduction have given many teachers and students their most rewarding experiences in the foreign language classroom, but the natural hesitancy of students to practice in role play makes it necessary for the teacher to spend a lot of time 'requiring' paralinguistic and language acts of their students. Role playing is an effective way to prepare the students in a contrived

(artificial?) situation as the teacher directs the position of the body and the motion of the hands and expressions of the face—and it must be required, because often they will not do it of their own volition nor would they necessarily know how. Those who teach Japanese senmon gakko students must contend with introverted students on a daily basis. In the process of guiding students through the initial stages of using English, they need to be given time to develop trust in the instructor and the other students in an environment with comparatively low risk to their self-esteem. Trust can eventually enable the students to deal constructively with failure that will enable the teacher and student opportunities to diagnose the students' shortcomings.

Another example that 'requires that the teacher require language', is strategic competence:

> Finally, strategic competence is composed of verbal and non verbal communication strategies which enable speakers to handle breakdowns in communication and their lexico grammatical inadequacies and to enhance the effectiveness of their message (ibid. 117)

The authors have, on many occasions, had to resort to 'requiring' that the students stand and talk in nothing but English for two or three minutes just to show that they have enough English to avoid the use of their own language (cf. the earlier description on "Gaikosei—Naikosei"). During these occasions, the students evince the body language and expressions and conversation management techniques that make their attempts much more genuine in nature. And it is all spontaneous. And it is heavily dependent on the students' comfort with the situation, their ability to trust other people in the classroom and their willingness to look silly and make mistakes.

In other words, to get the students to actually communicate, the teacher must, initially abandon a basic principle of the post-communicative classroom—student centredness. It is important to stress the perception that in a Japanese senmon gakko, it is in fact the teachers' ability to successfully conduct a teacher-centred classroom with required language that will eventually give way to a student-centred classroom and hence to a communicative classroom. To take advantage of the advances reported in the literature, it is apparently necessary for teachers to postpone some of those same principles propounded therein.

2. Coherence

Coherence in a student-centred classroom poses a problem: Where does it come from? Brown and Yule (1983: 224-225) make the point that the

> reader's (or hearer's) effort to arrive at the writer's (or speaker's) intended meaning in producing a linguistic message

is the most important aspect of coherence. Referring us to Grice (1957) and Schiffer (1972) for formal arguments, Brown and Yule make a strong point for those who are charged with bringing coherence to the classroom. Carrell (1982) also argues the view that coherence is brought to the text and cannot be defined in terms of textual attributes. Couture identifies a property referred to as 'exigence'; texts "must be relevant to the assimilated systems of the writer and reader in the shared context the text invokes" (1986: 85). As the native language models in an EFL/ESL environment, teachers are a primary (the primary?) source of coherence in interpreting text/discourse generated by students.

The teacher's ability to be a source of coherence is arguably a result of maturity and experience. That ability to interpret incoherence in student compositions may be described as a three stage evolution: (a) disbelief and bewilderment, (b) educated guesses resulting from long term exposure to many of the common mistakes, (c) educated guesses and negotiations with the students to arrive at their intended meaning or as close to it as possible. The last stage comes from long term exposure in a stable environment that encourages the teachers to develop their ability to understand the student's point of view and the willingness to invest the time necessary. In other words, the teachers' working environment is a function of coherence in the EFL/ESL classroom.

3. The students' perception of the English language

The students' perception of English has a great deal to do with the barriers educators encounter in attempting to teach. English is perceived as some sort of script to be followed, an 'etic' or unchanging event'. Harris (1990: A1, 7-8) in his discussion of Kenneth Pike's theory of language, tagmemics (cf. Hyman 1975: Ch. 1; Robins 1980: Ch. 8; Lepschy 1982: Ch. 7), points out the danger of an investigator imposing cultural and methodological baggage upon a given situation; an outsider's views may fail to account for the underlying reasons and pragmatic content of a situation. This will work the

other way as well. To bring into a particular culture a foreign language for the purpose of teaching must subject that language to the presumptions of the culture to which it is brought. To teach English to Japanese people is to be confronted with their presumptions about the English language and English speaking cultures. Teachers in various situations are confronted with the myth of "conversation English" ; Japanese students want to learn a preconceived notion of a language which they know little about except through the ambiguous guidelines of the Mombusho imposed curriculum and texts.

A discussion of the preconceptions that teachers encounter is related by Nordquist (1993). She describes her encounters with Japanese "education" as facts to be memorized with little or no independent decision making; exposure to flexibility, variation and creativity is inadequate or missing. The Mombusho guidelines are, to illustrate Nordquist's point, prescribed as sequenced texts with structurally made scripts. (One notable exception is the testbooks for oral communication B, a new course for English in high school which starts in 1994.) Entrance exams are the main focus of schooling, and curricula are composed of grammar explanations and text translation exercises. This, then, is the environment in which Japanese students encounter their formal and formative schooling in English. This is where they develop their misconceptions of the English language and this is the environment that teachers must contend with if they are to teach English as a medium of communication. Authentic, dynamic English is, arguably, an alien concept to many Japanese students. Rather than a living 'organic entity', it is a lifeless series of scripts to be applied in set situations.

4. English as a dynamic means of communication

Referring back to Harris' discussion (1990: 7-8), Pike's distinction of etic (features of an event which do not change the 'meaning' for participants) and emic (features of an event which do change meaning for the paricipants) might be placed within a methodological perspective. Etic events can be defined and taught as preconceived scripts, e. g. religious rituals and legally defined responsibilities. Students could be trained to participate in High Mass in a Roman Catholic church or to give a statement to a police officer.

Emic events would have to be taught within a more variable context with a decidedly heuristic emphasis. The students could be given a general outline of a situation that included personality types, roles and desired tasks to be accomplished. The students would then be presented with variations in roles played and barriers to be sur-

mounted. Emic events would necessarily involve training in the maintenance and repair of the event, i. e. how to guide and re-establish an event if assumptions were not met or if unspoken protocol was breached. Emic events might in fact contain etic factors that differ from person to person and place to place; a conversation might be considered a fairly flexible and variable content, but there are attitudes and subjects better left out of some conversations. The students would need to be trained to observe, to follow the examples of others in unknown situations, to introduce topics in such a way as to be retractable or easily modified without creating any discomfort (a very tall order at times) in the event that unspoken taboos were broken. In other words, students would need to know how to infer unspoken rules and employ them in appropriate situations, they would need to learn the rules of each different situation. These events would present a greater challenge to the students and the teacher, but in the process the 'conversational English' myth could be contructively dismantled.

5. Authentic writing tasks

Having advocated a meaning-centred programme to incorporate the students' interests and future needs in the classroom, the actual use of English in communicating is arguably a preferred approach in writing instruction. To give examples that may reinforce a real world context, students should not hand in writing assignments; they should write letters and mail them; they can write to businesses in English speaking countries to solicit and collect information that will be useful in their chosen profession; they can communicate with pen-pals and they can write each other. These are extracurricular activities that enable them to use English in actual situations with native speakers or non-native speakers. They explore its use for themselves, and they manifest a much more natural style when they use English in their interpersonal communications and gain confidence in their ability to hold discourse with native speakers.

The students may come to see the writing assignments as independent from the classroom and can relate them to real life: The tasks are real—they fulfill a real function in a real world. The responses to the students' letters evince variability that aids in dissipating the scripted stereotype. Students learn that they must do more than just meet the teachers' demands; they must communicate in English with other students, and people outside of the classroom.

As noted earlier, compliance with assigned tasks can be very inadequate. The structure imposed by the outside world compels the students to anticipate deadlines by

forcing them to actually perform their work between classes rather than copying from another classmate just before class. These circumstances can frequently impose an attitude of responsibility. They must perform outside the classroom, and this establishes in the students' minds their ability to actually engage in authentic communication. The responsibility assumed by the students can significantly reduce the teachers' work load by decreasing the amount of effort spent supervising them. Teachers will be able to adjust to the pace imposed on the classroom by boosting the students' rate of learning.

6. Student-centred

It is a very natural step to develop a student-centred classroom while establishing a meaning-centred one. Often their perception of education, shaped by their social and previous educational environment, is what Glasser refers to as "coercive education" (cited in Gura, 1993: 66-67). The students have (as mentioned before) never exercised a great deal of real choice in their environment, and they display the same resistance toward an imposed environment that can be expected of anyone who wishes to exercise their own free will. Student resistance to methods used in class can be reduced by getting them involved in deciding the class activities and content areas — negotiating with the students for reasonable objectives and explaining the best means for attaining their goals empowers them to relinquish the parent-child relationship they have always had with authority figures and places more choices in their reach with the attendant responsibilities.

Negotiating compromises also has a direct application in the realm of the students' concept of the learning process. Students often have expectations that may make it necessary to modify what the teacher feels is the optimum strategy, so the students will not feel discomfort with their situation just as Bloor (1993: 37) reports in a situation not unlike those in Japan: When students attach a "low face value" to a strategy or a procedure which may be considered an optimal choice by the teacher, it is because they have rather set ideas about learning. As Nunan (1989: 86) points out, it then becomes necessary to discuss the reasons for the practices in question and to negotiate a compromise. The students frequently react to overbearing authority by withdrawing and refusing to cooperate. In learning to deal with the students, the authors have come to consider that the central authority figure arguably plays one of the major roles in the depressed interest students have in their language education.

B. Continuous Assessment

Vocational school language teachers must find ways to: (1) motivate sullen students who may prove disruptive, (2) assure motivated students that their money has been well invested and their time will be as well, (3) define the level of competence the students have at present and where they can go next and (4) provide evidence of the teachers' expertise and efforts and, thereby, establish their authority as an educators to administrators. Continuous assessment often provides the means to accomplish these goals.

Continuous assessment in this discussion differs from 'computerized continuous measurement' (Bunderson, Inoue & Olsen 1989: 388) in that: (1) It is not (at this time) a computerized educational measurement system, (2) Although it is continuous it is not imbedded in the curriculum since most senmon gakko curricula are inadequately defined, (3) It is obtrusive, since the students' apprehension of assessment is a fact of life that must be dealt with openly and constructively rather than being placed out of sight, (4) While it is an attempt to emphasize the dynamic rather than the static, institutional/administrative agendas often intervene to impose static parameters, (5) While the data is available to the teacher and the students, a representation of the domain to be mastered is undefined, because commonly, the administrations lack defined goals, (6) There is no scaling as such, students master the assigned tasks without any differential in statistical weighting, at or above the same minimal level regardless of the time it takes and any statistically determined IRT (item response theory) scale values for difficulty are beyond the resources and the expertise of most senmon gakko teachers, (7) Its tasks are inadequately referenced with respect toward the real world tasks to which it might refer (the common lack of a comprehensive needs analysis renders referencing a matter of guess work), and (8) It is unlikely that any assessment procedures in senmon gakko will benefit from (or wait for) research support for psychometric procedures except those which are brought directly into the classroom by the individual teachers, since advances in assessment do not seem to be an administrative priority at the institutional or the national level.

An adequate and more simple definition of continuous assessment is the one given by Shafritz, Koeppe and Soper:

> Assessing a student's performance at ongoing, periodic levels for the purpose of monitoring the student's progress and adjusting the teaching strategies or expectations accordingly

(1988: 121).

This approach bypasses the administration and places the process of assessment in the classroom teachers' hands even if some of the parameters or objectives are dictated by administrations with much less concern for educational prerogatives.

1. Management benefits of continuous assessment

Wadden and Megovern (1993: 146) assert that classroom management skills are essential for the learning environment and administrative duties expected by the administrations. These essential management skills are well served through continuous assessment. This strategy allows the teacher to construct an *ad hoc* syllabus in the classroom or modify an existing one with integrated management strategies that give the teacher the needed flexibility to accommodate administrative policies, beneficially influence students' expectations (realistic and unrealistic), establish a rational basis for an appropriate pace, reduce workload, and promote educational priorities.

Continuous assessment compiles a visible class-to-class record for the students and the administration to see. It is the established record of objectives taught in class. In this way, the teacher can show that students are provided with the opportunities to master a subject and justify the teacher's decisions. In this way, any question of effort and competence on the teacher's part can be constructively challenged—a critical point in promoting the teacher's role as an authority in education.

2. Accountable teaching

Apart from management demands, establishing whether the students *are* actually learning the practical objectives set forth is also a professional concern of any ethical educator in a vocational school. Worthen (1993) reiterates the need for educators to accept their part in being accountable for the desired student outcomes (insofar as the teacher can be, it should be added) and to actually show that the student has reached (or failed to reach) the required goals. By staying abreast of the students' progress, the syllabus reflects realistic academic requirements which the students will be able to fulfill. If students are unable to fulfill the objectives, then all parties have the evidence that they need to make adjustments in the learning procedures.

3. Teacher training and student-teacher negotiations

Continuous assessment can be used from the students' perspective to provide the instructor with the information required to adjust to the students' rate of learning, their eccentricities, and as a means to negotiate with the students. It is, however, a controversial subject. Maurice (1992) discusses some of the advantages and criticisms of using students to evaluate teachers and their work. It would not be prudent to advocate an institutionalized system of student evaluations, because administrations in Japan are inclined to use them primarily as punitive procedures; as summative rather than formative evaluations. Teachers can give the students objective questionnaires to evaluate the teacher's work in the classroom for a means of discussion and feedback to reduce stress in the environment and give the more reticent students a low-risk environment in which to register their difficulties. These evaluations may keep the teacher in touch with the pace of the class, the students' level of comprehension, and the trivial things that can become major irritants.

When students have the opportunity see that they are not powerless to effect their environment, they respond favourably to seeing their opinions count for something. As a simple illustration of the way this works, one of the authors discovered one very industrious class could not copy notes as fast as they were being written and erased. As a result of the assessment of the instructor's activities, there was greater sensitivity to their rate of work and they saw evidence of their ability to effect the classroom environment. The stress level was visibly reduced for everyone involved in the learning process.

4. Modifying unrealistic attitudes?

These evaluations also provide the means for student self-evaluation. Students who are unaccustomed to choices need constant supervision. The continuous assessment in which they participate gives them a constant update on their efforts with which they must actively deal. To illustrate this point, the authors ask the students to state whether they have studied the assigned material sufficiently before giving them a quiz. Then the students are told to estimate the grade they will probably get. There is a post-exam answer and discussion session that gives them immediate feedback and the opportunity to see their progress in light of their efforts. This leads to more realistic expectations and, hence, more responsible outcomes. Additionally, if everybody misses a point

on the test, it's a pretty good bet it was not covered sufficiently, and the students are exonerated. With this approach the teacher then has the opportunity to deal only with those areas that need the most attention and, in this way, can make better use of the teacher's time. Additionally, he/she may then have the opportunity to constructively deal with individual students who do invest the time needed to learn the objectives, but can not realize any significant gains.

5. Testing to teach

Continuous assessment is also a strategy that has proven to be very productive in promoting learning gains. Dempster (1992) makes the case for using tests to teach; this is a strategy one of the authors has used since 1989 (Simmons, 1991). Learning retention for frequent testing is higher than the more traditional and time consuming pretest review strategy. Nungester and Duchastel (1982) have shown that memory consolidation is more effective with testing than review. They, along with Dempster (1992), both refer back to the work of Jones (1923-1924) who demonstrated the consolidation function of testing. The greater returns for time invested in studying are also readily apparent to the students who are given demonstrable evidence that they can learn. The strategy of frequent and cumulative testing is also described by Dempster (1992) as a strategy to circumvent their poor study habits, because they are consistently held accountable for the need to study.

6. Immediate feedback for learning gains and time management

Immediately after each test —the golden moment when students are the most receptive to the topic at hand—the teacher should discuss the answers with them. Spitzer (1939) reached the same conclusion that immediate recall through the medium of a test with a subsequent opportunity for self-correction was a superior format to the traditional 'test-and-wait-for-the-grade' routine, because retention was significantly greater. This immediate feedback also reduces the amount of time spent scoring their individual tests, since they all do their own in class as the teacher and students discuss the results.

Using tests to teach is also an effective strategy for large-class management. Objective tests can be used as work sheets which the students use in class when they first enter the classroom. The initial unstructured time at the beginning of the class be-

comes a period in which the students focus their attention on the subject at hand, and the atmosphere is quickly established. As previously mentioned, many students at senmon gakko are undisciplined and need a great deal of structure. The test/worksheet is an effective time-management procedure with which they are very familiar.

7. Test anxiety and assessment reliability

Student test anxiety can be allayed by using the tests in each class. It can establish a predictable feature that the students can plan for, a procedure that allows them the opportunity to know where their difficulties lie and the opportunity to conquer the all too common fear of the inevitable mid-term and final exams they will face. Continuous assessment also has a greater reliability which benefits student negotiations. Hughes (1989, ch. 5) points out that the greater number of tests (and by implication more test items) give a much better profile of their skills than do a few large tests and as such are much more fair — a fact that is not lost on the students when they see how vulnerable they are to a few bad scores with a programme of low test frequency.

C. A Reading Approach to Accommodate Given Parameters

The Guided Reading Procedure (GRP) is a total lesson design developed by A. Manzo (Manzo & Manzo, 1990: 102-107) who first used it in an inner-city setting to help students learn how to intensify their reading activity. It incorporates the three stages of the reading process: prereading preparatory activities, guided silent reading support, and postreading reflection and skill development. The procedure has garnered strong empirical validation in numerous environments and has been used successfully with students who have very low motivation. The procedure has strong implications in EFL/ESL classrooms in Japanese vocational schools. A great many of the students have developed a perception of English as an unlearnable ordeal. They respond by giving up quickly. The GRP gives immediate results in the classroom to these students: they can see for themselves that it is possible to learn how to read.

As elaborated earlier, in working with the vocational students, the teacher must deal with poor motivation, suspicion of teaching strategies, inadequate study habits, insufficient background knowledge, and as the result of these problems, the authors would add, low self-esteem. The GRP can deal with these complications with a well structured read and recall strategy. This is a detail focused "bottom-up" approach

that accommodates the insufficient background knowledge that students bring to the EFL/ESL classroom. As the students develop the habit of looking for major points, cohesive ties, topographical organization and acquire more background knowledge, some of the more advanced students begin to develop a 'top-down' approach.

The GRP is a technique that reinforces efficient study skills that the students can take with them when they leave the school. It uses the continuous assessment component to give immediate feedback and provides both the teachers and their students a constant update on their progress. It is applicable to any reading the student may engage in, since it teaches the student to read and ask questions as they read — a characteristic of an efficient reader, something many vocational students may not even be able to do in their own language.

The GRP is also an efficient supplementary strategy to give the students practical experience in getting their thoughts out in writing. The students read a selected portion of text silently. Then, while they recall verbally in class, the teacher guides them through a summation exercise. The teacher outlines the information on the board while pointing out the extraneous information. The students are given a chance to return to the text, and then check it against the previous summary the teacher wrote on the board. This reinforces the need to reread the passage more than once. It is the authors' experience that the students learn to ask themselves questions as they reread.

It is easy enough to record these recall activities and establish the needed documentation necessary for dealing with administrative requirements. This strategy also has the added advantage of being self-contained: the teacher can conduct the entire procedure in the classroom without the need to involve the administration.

CONCLUSION

Teachers are confronted by: (1) the students' lack of preparedness, misconceptions and motivation, (2) the lack of accountability inherent in administrative policy and the students' attitude, (3) the low order of priority given to educational preroga tives, (4) the lack of esteem for career teachers, 5) the overloads with which they must work and 6) an overall lack of support from ELT research. All of these create a complex maze of barriers to educators' to develop and institute methodology. These political, social and temporal restrictions profoundly influence the teachers' role, significantly limit the amount of education that takes place and make any attempts at innovation and the use of advances in methodology nearly impossible.

The task of education obviously involves a great deal more than teaching people who are ready, willing and able to learn. It is necessary to expand the definition of methodology set forth by Richards (1990: 11) and add three more to the list of five central issues: professional counseling skills, negotiation skills with the administration and researcher training (to inform researchers of the environment as it actually is).

It is not enough to merely note that teachers organize and control student behavior or that they may be a counselor and a friend to the students (Richards, ibid: 12). To emphasize the measures that may be necessary to deal comprehensively with the students' difficulties, the ESL programme ('Applied English Center'; EAP) at the University of Kansas actually has psychiatrists on call for the students. Teachers at the EAP are trained to recognize the symptoms of profound stress in students (Coffey, 1993). The students in senmon gakko have their own individual problems, and the teachers must be able to function as counselors. The students' reticence and fear of looking out of place can be a severe load on the normal classroom management demands. The environment at senmon gakko does not encourage the development of counseling skills nor does it allow time to deal with the students' problems.

On the other hand, negotiation skills with administrators add another dimension to the teachers job description. The working environments are mostly controlled by administrators who may or may not agree with the priorities of the faculty. Teachers must be able to deal with these administrations from a position of authority in education; it is an unavoidable fact which has made familiarity with the labour laws essential for teachers who work in vocational schools. Negotiation skills are necessary for teachers who want to hang on to their positions from year to year and see any improvements in the environment.

Teachers need support from research. They teach in the real world with real people. When Coulthard addressed the teachers' real-time limitations, he came so very close to identifying the problem:

> Finally and most importantly, we need some serious research into the teaching/learning process – a disturbingly large number of those who have successfully learned several foreign languages see the problem largely in terms of learning vocabulary and structures. Language teachers work in a real and not an ideal world and will always have too little time. Only when we have studies which compare the ultimate ***communicative*** performance of students who have followed structural, communicative and mixed syllabuses will we be able to say for sure whether the best way to teach students to communicate is to teach them communicatively. (1985: 159)

Vocational language school teachers, especially part-time non-Japanese teachers, in Japan are often working with imposed, poorly defined curricula. To actually investigate the best way to teach students to communicate is beyond the reach of all but a few teachers as they juggle large classes, demanding workloads and threats of employment instability.

The teacher as a mere button-pushing technician to be controlled by precise systems, programs and schedules has been a problem with researchers' perception of the teachers role in the classroom. This perception may be changing (Gais, 1991: 9–10) But, for the time being it has a great deal to do with the lack of relevancy teachers find in the research literature; an obstacle that has rendered research virtually invisible to most teachers.

In establishing their own methodology, teachers must be personally compelled by ethical commitments to improve their competency, ethics which they bring with them to the field of education. However, teachers are hamstrung by the political and social parameters which they encounter. The necessity of justifying their actions in restrictive and often punitive situations must lead them to spend a great deal of their personal time reading, writing, experimenting, asking questions, sharing experiences, and documenting their experiences as well as those of other teachers with whom they discuss these problems. It is hoped that this article may be credited as an attempt to inform research and provide some answers to Gais' call to:

> Make it a professional priority to explore the process by which teachers adopt and adapt innovations. What are the factors that encourage individual teachers and groups of teachers to accept innovations? What are the factors that lead them to reject particular innovations out of hand? (Gais, 1991: 17)

Through all of this, it is patently obvious that there are two primary considerations in methodology in vocational schools (senmon gakko) in Japan: the teachers' education authority and commitment. All other considerations follow from these two.

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